



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Route 135, Westborough, MA 01581

tel: (508) 389-6360; fax: (508) 389-7891

www.nhesp.org

Description: Coastal Heathland Cutworms are noctuid moths. The forewings are reddish-brown, with bluish-white terminal bands and black costal wedges. The hind wings are grayish-brown, darker towards the terminal area. Wingspan is 30-35 mm. The larva is a smooth-skinned, brownish-gray to brownish-black cutworm, reaching a length of about 30 mm (Crumb 1956).

Habitat: In eastern North America, the Coastal Heathland Cutworm occurs in xeric and open coastal plain habitats on sandy soil. In Massachusetts, this species is associated with sandplain grasslands, dunes and bluffs, coastal heathlands or other maritime shrublands, and occasionally open pitch pine/scrub oak barrens.

Life History: Adult moths emerge mostly in July, with late-emerging or summer-aestivating individuals flying through the end of September. Partially grown larvae overwinter, and resume feeding in the spring. Host plants in Massachusetts are undocumented, but probably consist of a variety of low-growing shrubs. In the western U.S., larvae feed on serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) and wild currant (*Ribes*) (Lafontaine 1998).

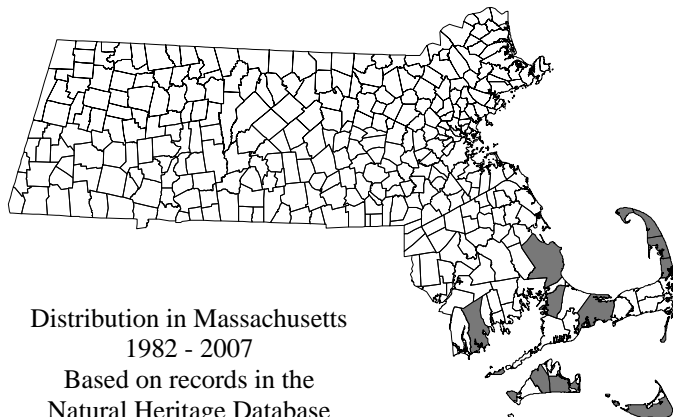
Range: Widely distributed across western North America, from southern British Columbia to southern California, east to Alberta and New Mexico; in the East, limited to the Atlantic coastal plain from southern New Hampshire to southern New Jersey (Lafontaine 1998). In Massachusetts, occurs along the coast from Cape Cod and the offshore islands west to Dartmouth and north to Boston.

Coastal Heathland Cutworm

Abagrotis nefascia

State Status: **Special Concern**

Federal Status: None



Adult Flight Period in Massachusetts

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Threats

- Habitat loss
- Fire suppression
- Invasion by exotic plants
- Introduced generalist parasitoids
- Insecticide spraying
- Off-road vehicles
- Light pollution

References

Crumb, S.E. 1956. *The Larvae of the Phalaenidae*. Technical Bulletin No. 1135, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

Lafontaine, J.D. 1998. Noctuoidea, Noctuidae, Noctuini. Fascicle 27.3, *The Moths of North America North of Mexico*. Allen Press, Lawrence, Kansas.

Updated June 2007
M.W. Nelson